

House Resolution 1698

By: Representatives Ashe of the 56th, Thomas of the 55th, Jones of the 44th, Willard of the 49th, Orrock of the 58th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Georgia Municipal Association to assess the need for state legislation to assist
2 municipalities in code enforcement against absentee landowners and landlords; and for other
3 purposes.

4 WHEREAS, citizens in Georgia have voiced concerns about vacant houses in their
5 neighborhoods and the problems commonly associated with such homes such as drug and
6 prostitute activities and being used as storehouses for stolen goods and shelter for the
7 homeless; and

8 WHEREAS, in 2003 and 2004, Georgia led the country in mortgage loan fraud with Atlanta
9 tying with Dallas - Ft. Worth for the dubious honor of the metropolitan mortgage fraud
10 capital for the country; and

11 WHEREAS, in 2004, Fulton County ranked first in the nation in mortgage fraud according
12 to the Federal National Mortgage Association data, with DeKalb County not far behind,
13 ranking third nationally, according to the Fannie Mae data for 2002 and 2003; and

14 WHEREAS, Fannie Mae has identified that ZIP codes beginning with 303, the majority of
15 which are in Fulton, have generated more mortgages containing misrepresentations than any
16 other ZIP code cluster in the nation; and

17 WHEREAS, Metro Atlanta's losses due to mortgage fraud exceed \$100 million, and with no
18 slowdown in sight losses are expected to rise; and

19 WHEREAS, empty houses are the most visible sign of mortgage fraud as the people who
20 steal money from lenders at the closing table never intend to make the mortgage payments
21 and eventually the lender forecloses, and the scammer, or his or her unwitting tenants if he
22 or she rents out the property, are forced out leaving the title records in such a mess that it

1 generally takes months to untangle them for a legitimate sale with the house standing empty
2 in the meantime; and

3 WHEREAS, abandoned homes breed criminal activity and lead to the deterioration of
4 neighborhoods; and

5 WHEREAS, the Georgia Municipal Association is the only state organization that represents
6 municipal governments in Georgia with a membership totaling more than 485 municipal
7 governments; and

8 WHEREAS, the problems that citizens in neighborhoods, code enforcement officers, and
9 municipalities are facing in seeking to enforce the codes against absentee landowners and
10 landowners does not appear to be solvable at the municipal level.

11 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
12 the members of this body recognize the issues with code enforcement against absentee
13 landowners and landlords and hereby call upon the Georgia Municipal Association to study
14 this issue and make recommendations to the Georgia House of Representatives no later than
15 December 31, 2006, as to what can be done on a state level to address this growing problem.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
17 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Georgia Municipal
18 Association.